



The City of Niles Planning Department, the Southwestern Michigan Economic Growth Alliance, the Niles Downtown Development Authority, and the Greater Niles Community Development Corporation for the Big Brown Take Down

In 2003 the city of Niles embarked on “the Big Brown Take Down,” a major facelift for two blocks of the city’s commercial district, using grant funds from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. The “Take Down” involved the removal of the aluminum facades and masonry repair on two complete city blocks at no cost to the property owners. Business owners were then able to consult with a local sign company to design a new sign for the front of each building. Streetscape improvements and rehabilitation of upper-level residential units for Main Street properties were also included in the grant project.

The rehabilitation of Main Street in Niles is an ongoing project. Niles was selected as a Michigan Main Street community in 2004, which will assist property owners with the restoration of storefronts. The streetscape along Main Street was completed and rededicated in December 2004. The overall effect brings cohesion to downtown Niles and an atmosphere that is pedestrian friendly and aesthetically pleasing. In addition to the initial state grant of \$780,000, a local funding match of \$500,000 and \$1.4 million private dollars financed this major downtown overhaul, creating approximately one hundred jobs.

The Niles Main Street Revitalization project began with the full cooperation of individuals from four entities: the Southwestern Michigan Economic Growth Alliance (SMEGA), the Niles Downtown Development Authority (DDA), the Greater Niles Community Development Corporation (CDC), and the Niles planning department. The team worked diligently to ensure that everyone involved acted in the best interest of the city of Niles. Their efforts resulted in the complete transformation of the downtown. The Big Brown Take Down revealed the historic character of the buildings that sets Niles apart from other communities.



Historic Preservation in Michigan